

# COMPARATIVE STUDIES

*(Continued)*

BY

**K. RAMA VARMA RAJA, B.A., M.R.A.S.**

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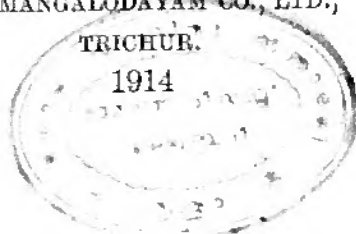
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## PREFACE.

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This Tribute Volume written in stupendous mute admiration and commemoration of the bold, unparalleled and unique course, His Highness the reigning Rajah of Cochin has decided on, and publicly announced, of retirement from public life and throne for peace and rest in old age, will, I hope, prove a general introduction to the History of Cochin and also serve to remove and correct some wrong impressions and ideas that have found their way into some recent publications. For instance, Mr. Achyuta Menon, in his *Cochin State Manual*, (p. 47) makes out a peculiar old custom, 'a fruitful source of discord,' prevalent in the Cochin Royal Family till the advent of the Portuguese, by which an aged care-worn monarch was bound to give up his crown for pious devotional life—a custom which we meet with as a working ideal in the annals of ancient Indian royal dynasties. This does not

seem to be the correct reading of history. First of all, there is nothing to prove such a custom. Secondly, the internal dissensions, and the wars and reverses to be traced thereto, are partly, if not solely, to be attributed to the peculiar commercial policy of the Raja's early European allies—the Portuguese and the Dutch—who, unlike their more successful British successors, were high-handed in promoting their interests, but lukewarm in their support of the cause of their friendly Native Princes. It was not a straightforward thorough one of "give and take," but a selfish commercial one—to acquire rights and to shirk responsibilities, and to gain much and to lose nothing (p. p. 74, 98 etc., C. S. M). Then again, shortly after His Highness's public announcement of his approaching abdication of the throne, the *Madras Mail* published a contribution from its correspondent quoting precedents of customary and compulsory abdications of throne from the annals of Cochin, which, too, seem to be mere legendary tales and no more. However well informed these

authorities may be, and with due deference to their views and judgments, I beg to honourably differ from them and to attempt to give, in the following pages, a true and clear historical perspective of the Royal House of Cochin, which will consequently shine spotless and honourable before the eyes of the public, who are mourning the approaching unparalleled loss in anticipation. The British Lion too, having conferred on the present Ruler of Cochin, high honours and distinctions in recognition of his meritorious reign, seems to endorse and echo the following poetical sentiment with which this short preface is concluded:—

“भूतानुकम्पातवाहिस्फुटायत्  
गोश्रीरियं स्वस्तिमतीत्वदन्ते ।  
जीवंश्चिराच्छ्वदुपप्लवेभ्यः  
प्रजाः प्रजानाथ पितेव पाहि” ॥

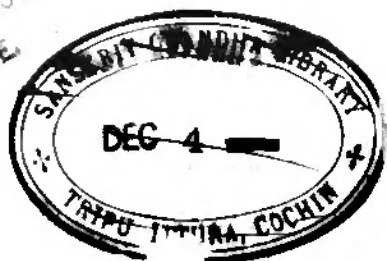
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No. 1



I

**The Royal House of Cochin,**  
**AND**  
**The Perumpadappu Svarupam.**

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What we know of the past history of this royal house is mostly gathered from the works and notices of foreign historians and travellers, which are the only accounts available in print for ready reference on this subject. Here, too, foreign productions are blindly swallowed with no regard for our digestive and assimilative power, and indigenous raw materials are hardly utilised: nay, such sources of information are even neglected and discredited without examination. We prefer the ready-made articles to the self-made ones. We lack true enthusiasm and enterprise, and means and facilities, for original research work; and we are further bound with red-tape too tightly to be

able to move about freely. These are the drawbacks of our productions, which are really re-productions and no more, if not worse —per versions or distortions of the original standard works. And it seems to me that, even after Mr. C. Achyuta Menon's exhaustive harvest of data for his "*Cochin State Manual*" — an up-to-date and admirable work and a wonderful storehouse of information about Cochin—there yet extends a vast virgin region yet to be explored and exploited, and in wading through this region, plucking and gathering wild fruits, the writer of this short essay, too, must be specially cautious and careful, lest he might be found fault with for trespass on the officially reserved area, and for disclosure of information which he had the rare opportunity to gather while in charge of the old State records some seven years or more ago now : and the reader will see that he, herein, meets with no fresh data or information that are not available for the general public.

2. It is perhaps paradoxical, but nevertheless true, to say that no subject can be well

and thoroughly understood without a knowledge of its opposite or rival. The one will not be complete without the other. Both are mutually inclusive and are to be studied together. The properties of heat and cold and the phenomena of life and death are not, each, studied in isolation, but in conjunction with its opposite. So also the history of a Kingdom or State cannot be properly understood without a knowledge of the history of its contemporary rivals. The early institutions of Cochin are therefore to be compared and contrasted with those of the rival kingdom of the Zamorin of Calicut. This comparative method supplemented by philological and archaeological evidences furnished by instruments (both written and sharp-edged—we mean documents as well as tools for explorations) may shed more light on the past history and early institutions of Cochin; and in the following paragraphs we propose to indicate the line of further research urged above.

3. It is a well established fact, as a

well-known writer observes, that all ancient civilizations were born and grew up in the cradle of attractive fertile regions well-watered and irrigated by the perennial rivers flowing by, which also periodically fertilized the soil with rich alluvial mud brought down in freshes. Such civilizations are hence called "the River Civilizations" in contrast with the later and the modern "the Sea and the Ocean Civilizations," which are built up at seaports or ocean gates and guarded by the sea-walls and ocean liners. One of the river-fed ancient indigenous civilizations of the Malabar Coast, *but not the earliest*, may be looked for, in the course of the Ponnani, otherwise known as the Bharata or Perar river, on either bank of which there must have once flourished the wealthy and influential Brahman houses and institutions along with the two rival royal houses—the Perumpadappu Svarupam (Cochin) and the Nediyrippu Svarupam (the Zamorin's house) — the former on the southern and the latter on the northern side of the river. Both the words seem to mean the same thing, *viz.*,

'Great or extensive State.' (*Perum*=great and *Padappu*=either means a stretebed bed, or an area enclosed in a bund, raised ground or wall, and is a cognate form of *Padavu*. *Nediyirippu* is formed of *Nediya*=great, and *Virippu*=expansion or expanded area). In both the royal houses, Chennamangalat Nambooripad, a celebrated hereditary family of magicians, is the recognised family priest in domestic ceremonies, expecially of *tantraic* nature. Both the royal houses have similar or parallel institutions to maintain and support. Both celebrate the unique *Attachamayam* ceremony, each in its own time-honoured way. Both patronise Vedic colleges, which are rival to each other, the former at Trichur, and the latter at Tirunavaya. Similarly, the Raja of Cochin was the patron-head of the Chovaram faction, while the Zamorin patronised its rival, the Panniyur faction; and the early quarrels between the two royal houses were faction-fights in the interests of these two rival village communities (C. S. M. Pages 41 and 42). The daily routines of firing salutes (*Niyama Vedi*),

the native military or royal band (*Nakara*) and other minor customary observances, (*Chirutavili etc.*)\* are common to both and rarely met with in other royal houses. There are five *stanams* and *stanamdars* in the Zamorin's family and the corresponding feature of the Cochin royal house seems to have been its so-called five *tavazhies* or branches (C. S. M. Page 46). This parallelism is suggestive of an original common form or rule of succession in both the royal houses, which was modified and departed from, in the inevitable course of their political history. In the countries extending northward from the Ponnani or Bharata river, the Quilon (Kollam) or Malabar Era is calculated from the first of the month that immediately follows the Onam festival, which falls, and is celebrated, in the month of Chingom, the first day of which is

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\* Calling *Chiruta* (a name for the maid-servant), repeatedly and in loud voice, to take charge of the remains of the royal meals or banquet, which are her dues, and her response in equally loud voice to this call for duty.

the new year's day in countries lying to the south of the same river. \* The above are some of the important points of similarity and difference between the two ancient rival royal houses of Cochin and Calicut (Perumpadappu and Nediyrippu Svarupams), which are familiar to all.

4. The village of Perumpadappu in the Ponnani Taluk (British Malabar) is said to have been the original home of the royal house of Cochin, which took its name from the same village and used to celebrate the coronation ceremony there till the middle of the seventeenth century (C. S. M. Ch. 1 Page 2).

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\* This riparian boundary line dividing the northern and southern Quilon (Kollam) countries or spheres, seems to have touched and passed by the head triangular point, Kollengode (Kollamkode), which must have been the junction of the two Quilons (Kollams) i. e., where the lines drawn from the two Quilon points (Kollams) must have met to form a triangle and to enclose Malabar proper marked by the observance of the Malabar or Quilon (Kollam) Era.

That there was a royal residence in this village where the senior member of the whole joint house used to be installed as the Perumpadappu *Muppu* or the Perumpadappu chief, and to hold his Court as such, we also admit. But we are not prepared to believe that it was the original home or the native land of the royal house, which we are inclined to locate in the village of Pazhayannur ("my old home") in the present Talapilli Taluk in Cochin State for reasons more than one in number:- First of all, the patron deity of the royal house is located and worshipped in an old temple in this village, which lends its name both to the deity (Goddess) and to the shrine, which are therefore known as Pazhayannur Goddess and Pazhayannur temple. Secondly, wherever the ruling family has residence or palace, we invariably find associated therewith, a small shrine built and dedicated to the same Goddess. Last, but not the least important is the curious fact, well-known to, but lost sight of by, all, although it is condensed into the very name of the village, viz., Pazha-

yannur, which means 'my old native land.' It is that the members of the ruling house till lately were, and the ruler even now is, scrupulously observing the family *taboo* prohibiting their entrance and worship in the original temple of their tutelary deity at Pazhayannur—a strange and curious *taboo*, the origin and nature of which, if correctly understood and explained, will shed much light on the family history of the Cochin royal house. The tradition current in the royal family circle, in explanation of this *taboo*, traces it to the loss of Vannerinad and Perumpadappu village in a war with the Zamorin about the middle of the seventeenth century and consequent discontinuance of the formal coronation ceremony (p.p. 97, 98, and 103 foot note C. S. M.), which is said to have been a necessary preliminary to the State-entry and worship in the Pazhayannur temple, which was consequently abandoned. That such a reverse, as the loss of the ceremonial capital, would have such a far-reaching mental or sentimental effect, may be inferred from recent

instances of a similar nature. To mention one: the penultimate Raja of Cochin, during whose reign the territorial and boundary disputes between Cochin and Travancore were adjudicated, and the Koodalnanikkam temple at Irinjalakuda, consequently lost to Cochin, never entered and worshipped in this temple since, but was content with the worship of the deity in his palace shrine at Tripunittura, and this has since acquired the quasi-authority or force of an established custom. Similar origin may be assigned to the shrine of the Pazhayannur Goddess at the Cochin palace. We have some more explanations to offer, explanations of the origin of this interesting *taboo*, which will be mentioned later on. Suffice it to say for the present that, as the result of a vow or a ban, the old home or native land of Pazhayannur was abandoned and deserted for ever, and Cochin adopted as the new home. Nor do we think that the coronation ceremony of the Raja of Cochin, i. e., the ceremonial installation of the ruler of Cochin as such, was ever celebrated in the village of Perumpadappu.

It has always been celebrated at Cochin, which was its original old capital, while the head of the Perumpadappu Svarupam used to be installed and to hold his court as such, in the village of this name. The distinction between these two titles will be explained presently.

5. In a foot note on page 2 of his C. S. M., Mr. Achyuta Menon cites a treaty with the Dutch dated 6th April 1698, containing provision for the prevention of the smuggling of pepper from *Kocchi-rajyam* and *Perumpadappu Nad*, implying thereby that these two were originally distinct but united under one sovereign power or rule for the time being. Not yet perceiving the self evident contrast between the two countries as expressed by their names—*Kocchi-rajyam* (small kingdom) and *Perumpadappu Nad* (extensive country), he labours on the next page to derive the name of the former from *Kocchazhi*, 'small or new harbour.' Before the formation of the island of Vaipin between the older seaboard tracts of Manappuram and Karappuram, there must have been only one large harbour of inland sea

extending eastward to the line of villages Kadamakudi, Ezhikara etc. (Ch: 1 page 9 foot note C. S. M.), when the two branches of the Alwaye river, the larger and the smaller respectively, emptied their contents into this sea, by the northern and the southern openings at its eastern shore some miles higher up from the present Cranganore and Cochin harbours and the formation of an island between these two points must have divided this once large inland harbour into two smaller openings at its northern and southern ends—the present Cranganore and Cochin harbours. Thus much we can imagine, understand and even admit; but the theories of “the small river” and “the small or new harbour” constructed on this slender basis in explanation of the word *Kocchi* (Cochin) seem to us to be far-fetched, fanciful, improbable and even preposterous (C. S. M. Ch: I page 3). We shall suggest some more possible derivations of the name *Kocchi*, when we deal with the next question who founded this small kingdom.”

6. “The tract of land” says Mr.

Achyuta Menon (Ch: II page 44 C. S. M.) "which comprises the present towns of Cochin and Mattancheri and their vicinity belonged originally to Idappilli, but early in the fifteenth century the Rajah of Idappilli made a present of it to the King of Cochin who happened to be his son." This tradition seems to receive further support from the current usage of conducting, at the Cochin palace and on an elaborate scale, an annual sacrifice to the elephant God (Ganapati) who is the patron Deity of the Idappilli royal house. Let us therefore accept this account as follows:— Early in the fifteenth century a prince of the royal house of Perumpadappu who happened to be the son of the then Rajah of Idappilli got the northern-most part of the Karappuram tract (page 9 C. S. M.) as a gift from his father and founded the small kingdom of Cochin as distinguished from the large State in the north (Perumpadappu Nad). This prince, we venture to suggest, was not the head of his royal house (Perumpadappu Svarupam), but was a junior member thereof,

presumably *the second in rank* or in the line of succession (*Elaya i Tavazhi*). That there might have been five or more or less divisions or branches of the great royal house of Perum-padappu we do not at all deny or question, but the so called five *tavazhis* seem to us to have had the original signification of five ranks or steps of succession corresponding to the five *stanams* in the Zamorin's house, the word *tavazhi* (*daya-vazhi*) meaning. "the line of succession." This junior prince having derived his title from his father chief as well as from his own maternal royal house was doubly royal, and a junior prince, especially in the Idappilli royal house, being generally known and addressed as *Kocchu Thampuran*, his kingdom, too, took the same name *Kocchi-rajyam*. This also seems to be another possible explanation and derivation.

7. Next, the rule of succession followed in the royal houses; which requires every junior member of rank or *stanam* to give it up with all his titles, estates, etc., including what he himself acquires while holding the

rank, in favour of his successor when he goes up to a higher rank and assumes possession of all its belongings. The titles, estates etc., are regarded as permanently and inseparably attached to the rank, and not to the holder thereof, who, for the time being, is to exercise the rights, to meet the obligations and to enjoy and manage the estates in the interests, and in accordance with the dignity, of the rank. To apply this to the royal house of Cochin the head or senior member of the whole joint house of the Perumpadappu Svarupam was the chief of the Perumpadappu *Nad* or larger State the second in rank was the ruler of *Kocchi-radjyam* or smaller kingdom. When the latter became the senior member, he was to remove to his royal residence in the Perumpadappu village and to assume the former title with all its estates and prerogatives leaving the latter throne behind to the next in rank, his successor. This customary rule of succession worked smoothly and well up to the demise of king Goda Varma, the early friend and staunch supporter of the Portuguese, in 1510, when

they, for protection and promotion of their interests on the Malabar coast, took the bold and high-handed step of abolishing the custom and restricting succession to the Cochin throne to the branch of their friend and supporter, the demised King Goda Varma, which was henceforth known as the *Elaya tavazhi*, having permanently retained therein the titles, estates and the sovereign authority attached to the second rank (page 74 C. S. M.). The course of succession thus altered, brought in complications and disputes (p.p. 74 foot note, 110 and 113 C. S. M.), which will be explained presently.

8. The next question is, 'if *this* ruler of Cochin also happened to be at the same time the senior member of the whole joint house what would happen?' He would also naturally covet and claim the privileges of the Chief (Muppu) of the larger State (Perumpadappu *Nad*); but he would not be allowed to enjoy them without protest and resistance from such members of the family as were permanently deprived of their title and claim to

the Cochin throne. These members addressing the ruler of Cochin in protest, would argue their point thus: If you retain the Cochin throne in your branch for ever, in violation of the customary rule of succession, you cannot legitimately aspire to the position of the Perumpadappu Muppu at the same time. If you want to enjoy the latter, you must vacate the former in favour of the prince next in rank in accordance with the customary rule, but you cannot enjoy both at one and the same time. The Rajah of Cochin would persist in asserting and enforcing his claim to the latter position also, and family feuds and quarrels would ensue and did ensue, with varying success now to one party and now to the other. The Rajah's enemies took advantage of these, and succeeded, sometimes, in inflicting on him, severe reverses and heavy losses. This seems to be the true and correct explanation of the political struggle of Cochin in olden days.

9. To follow the general lines of growth or developments of the two States up to their union and amalgamation under one ruler:—

The head of a primitive State was, as a rule, a priest-king. Ancient Babylon, Scandinavia, Greece, Rome and several other countries would supply instances of this;\* and the larger State of Perumpadappu *Nad* was more primitive in type, its chief having had to attend to both the temporal and spiritual duties, of which, the latter, in course of time, outgrew the former and the chief became more concerned with religious affairs and temple management than with temporal rule. His interest in the temples, and their management outgrew his political activity, which therefore became insignificant and gradually extinct. The smaller State of Cochin, on the other hand, founded at a time and a place which were favourable to political and commercial activities, and having had to be in close touch with foreign nations, developed these activities and became a political and

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\* Dr. Frazer "*The Golden Bough*," (2) "*Religion of Ancient Scandinavia*" by W. A. Craigie. (3) Dr. Hommel "*Civilization of the East*." This subject will be dealt at some length in Part III of this Essay.

**Commercial Power.** The latter prospered and “throve amain” while the former though larger in extent, declined in political status, prestige and importance and became an ‘*Estate*.’ Further, the loss of the ceremonial capital and consequent discontinuance of the formal coronation ceremony might also have operated to accelerate this political decline and fall. What would be a state without its capital and what its ruler or chief without his crown?

10. When the ruler of Cochin was denied the rank, privileges and authority of the Perumpadappu Chief for the permanent retention of the throne or crown of Cochin in his own branch of the great joint royal house, in violation of the customary rule of succession, the temple of the family patron deity at Pazhayannur, which was within the sole jurisdiction of the chief, was closed or shut against him in revenge for ever. He was not allowed to have any voice in the management of the temple and its properties, nor in the worship there. He was, as it were, ordered out of the temple premises, where the sole authority of the chief

prevailed. This ban of vengeance forbade his entry and worship in the temple, and he quietly withdrew contenting himself with worship of the tutelary deity in private shrines built at his own palace. The ruler, too, when deprived of the Chieftdom of Perumpadappu and its ceremonial capital in family quarrels and wars with the Zamorin, might have, under great provocation and irritation at his heavy losses and reverses, taken an oath "never to enter and worship in the Pazhayannur temple without the crown worn at the lost capital recovered," but continued to worship the deity in his palace shrines. Whatever be the nature of this *taboo*, whether it was an oath or a ban, its origin can ultimately be traced to the violation of the customary rule of succession under the compulsion of the Portuguese for retention of the Cochin throne or crown in one branch. For, this estranged a larger section of his own joint family, which, having consequently joined the enemies' camp, did not allow him to enjoy the Chieftdom of Perumpadappu for a time. But this also was permanently regained for the

ruling house on the final compulsory relinquishment, by the Chazhur Princes, of their claim to the title of Perumpadappu Muppu or the Chief of Perumpadappu (page 113 C. S. M.). Thus was brought about the permanent and lasting union of the Cochin throne and crown and the Chiefdom of Perumpadappu in the present ruling house of Cochin.

11. After having, in the foregoing paragraphs, briefly explained the points of similarity and difference between the institutions and observances that are met with in the royal houses of Cochin and Calicut, the foundation of the Cochin kingdom and throne, the customary rule of succession and its abolition, the so-called five *tavazhis* of the royal house of Cochin, the spiritual jurisdiction of the Chief of Perumpadappu *Nad*, the ban or the vow of exclusion of the ruler of Cochin from the Pazhayannur temple etc. etc., it remains for us to see whether the interesting passage quoted by Mr. Achyuta Menon (page 47 footnote C. S. M.) from Mr. Whiteaway's "*Rise of the Portuguese Power in India*" p.p. 107-108,

is not clear and intelligible without Mr. Menon's interpretation and explanation, which is that the ruler of Cochin following an old family custom or *mamool* used to abdicate the throne for pious devotional life in old age; (p. 47 C. S. M.) and which, in our humble opinion, there is nothing to corroborate and support except the old *Puranic* tales and fancy for new ideas. Let us have the whole passage before us. It runs as follows:—"The chieftainship of Cochin had, at the time of Alneida's arrival there, become vacant through the operation of an old custom. The head of the Cochin line was *always* a priest in charge of the worship of a temple, the next in succession was the ruling chief. *On the death of the head*, therefore, the ruling chief who, in this case, was Trimumpara the early friend of the Portuguese—was *promoted to the temple*. The question was, who was to succeed him? The senior of the *sister's son in the direct line* was closely allied with the enemies of the Portuguese, and the latter arranged, though not without difficulty, to set

him aside for another nephew more favourable to themselves. Trimumpara died in 1510 when the Portuguese found it convenient to abolish the custom." If the expression "the head of the Cochin line" is to be understood to mean as it evidently means "the head of the whole joint house (Perumpadappu Svarupam)", the passage presents no difficulty of interpretation. The head or senior member of the whole house (Perumpadappu Muppu) was always in charge of religious institutions, the junior member next in rank, the ruling Chief or Rajah of Cochin. Nay, Mr. Achyuta Menon's explanation or interpretation of customary abdication of the throne or crown in old age is untenable as the italicised word and phrase '*always*' and '*on the death*' are then inexplicable. For, the head of the Cochin line, need not always have been an old care-worn man, nor should the aged monarch have waited till the death of his senior for promotion to the temple.\* The rule of succession, its violation,

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\* The expression "promoted to the temple" in the above quoted passage is also very significant. For, it implies a higher rank.

the complications that followed and the union of spiritual and temporal duties, as explained above, will render the passage clear, and the state of things described by Mr. Menon himself later on, (pages 74 foot-note, 110 and 113 (C. S. M.) \* which would otherwise remain a puzzle. The precedent or parallel to the recent announcement by the present ruler of Cochin, of his intention to abdicate the throne for peace in old age may therefore be looked for, not in the annals of Cochin, but in the *Puranic* or mythical accounts of the royal dynasties of Ancient India—the solar and lunar dynasties—the traditions of which are still held as models or mottos for guidance in their modern

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\* “Some time after the succession to the throne was limited to the Elaya Tavazhi branch, the eldest member of the joint royal family, if senior in age to the reigning prince, was allowed to assume the title and dignities of Perumpadappu Muppu the reigning prince being known as the Maharaja of Cochin. The Chief was treated as an important personage and exercised some authority in social and religious matters.”

representative houses including the royal house of Cochin.

12. Mr. Achyuta Menon's initial mistake was that he started with premises which were really conclusions *viz.*, that the head of the Perumpadappu Svarupam was also the Rajah of Cochin at the same time and that these two titles, denoting the same sovereign power, were almost synonymous and interchangeable. But this was not the case at first. The two titles were distinct *stanams*\* held and enjoyed separately at first, but were finally consolidated

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\* What were these *Stanams* originally? The vestiges of the past seem to indicate that these junior ranks or *Stanams* were more or less internally independent vassal kingdoms subject, of course, to the suzerain authority of the senior of all. The Eralpad or second Rajah of Calicut is said to have had such territorial sovereign jurisdiction over an area lying between the Yagneswaram temple and the Karimpuzha river. The now meaningless affixing of the sign manual to the blank *cadjans* on formal installation or occasion to the titular ranks, of the junior *stanamdars* is regarded to be a relic

and united in one sovereign power in the middle of the eighteenth century only as explained above. The above criticisms of some of Mr. Menon's own views in solution of the difficult problems raised by his own initial mistaken presumption, do not at all detract from the value of his "*Cochin State Manual*" as a standing up-to date and exhaustive monumental work of reference on the Native State of Cochin, and it will remain so, we hope, for a long time to come.

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of the once necessary formal interchange of written royal warrants, and acknowledgment and tender of homage, between the Zamorin on the one hand, and his junior vassals on the other. This information furnished by a well informed member of the Zamorin's party during the latter's (Zamorin's) recent unprecedented friendly visit to H. H. the Rajah of Cochin, if correct and reliable as it probably is, would further clear the line of argument followed in this paper which may also prove a memento of this memorable historic event.

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## II

# The Fall and Division of The Cheraman Empire & The Kollam or Malabar Era.

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We have stated in Part I, that the native Kingdom or indigenous civilization founded on the banks of the Ponnani or Bharata river was *not the earliest*. There was an earlier one that preceded it, as there was a later one that followed it. The latter has already been mentioned. It was the kingdom or civilization founded at Cochin early in the fifteenth century which, having, on account of its peculiarly advantageous situation and necessary foreign relation, out-grown, in political and commercial importance, the mother kingdom and river civilization of the north (the Perumpadappu State) absorbed it, grew larger and after some swings of fortune, solidified

and settled itself into the present Cochin State: and it is the former, the pre-Perumpadappu Kingdom and civilization, that we are attempting to sketch here in outline only. The materials are scanty, traditional and even contradictory. The voluminous commentaries of scholars to solve the puzzle are still more bewildering and add to our perplexity. But we reserve complete freedom to ourselves to follow our own line of research, and our conclusions or conjectures may collide with the accepted views and be overcome, and perish in the contest. But we hope they will have a patient hearing and fair trial before they are condemned.

2. All the authorities agree in locating the centre of this ancient civilization of Malabar at Cranganore then variously known as Mouzuris or Muchiri, and Mnyirikkotta and Mahodavar-pattanam. This ancient capital and emporium being situated at the south end of the Chetwa island known as Manappuram (C. S. M. P. 9) commands water communications on all sides. Westwards extends the

Arabian sea, which, at the beginning of the Christian Era, formed a small inland sea or bay, as it were, on the southern side between this port and the next southern trading port, namely, Porakad or Porca lately identified by W. H. Schoff of Philadelphia with *Bacare* of the *Periplus* and *Barkare* of Ptolemy (Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, January 1913, pp. 130-33). Here, the Alwaye and the Chalakkudi rivers :flowing down from the eastern hills, empty their contents after their junction at Elantikara. On the eastern side spreads the backwater sheet connecting this opening with that at the north-end of the Manappuram tract viz; at Chetwa. Surrounded thus by water on all sides, it was the most favourable site on the Malabar Coast for a Sea civilization, a secure capital and a trade-emporium, all of which it was at the beginning of the Christian Era and even long before it. It therefore attracted foreign colonies and merchants from Phoenicia, Palastine, Syria, Chaldea, Egypt and other centres of the then flourishing Mediterranean civilization with which it was

admittedly in direct intercourse in those early days. Here are still extant a few of the magnificent edifices, temples of artistic beauty, great size, dimensions and proportions which besides testifying to its past traditional greatness serve also to revive its traditional memory. A line, or more than line, of the early rulers of Kerala known as the *Cheraman Perumals*\* reigned and held their courts here. It was a foreign dynasty or dynasties closely related to the ruling dynasties on the other side of the Western Ghats (Chera, Chola and Pandya.) The temple of Thiruvanchikulam here is considered to have been the sanctuary of their

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\* This title may be equivalent to 'Kings of Malabar' in this way: *Chera-man* (clayey or muddy soil) denotes the alluvial country of Malabar; and '*Perumal*' means King. Compare the local name of *Cheramanchira* derived, no doubt, from the agricultural mud bund annually put up at the place which is only a few miles south of Trichur; and also "the old native name of Egypt, *Kem* or *Chemi* (the black country) from the colour of its alluvial soil, source of its nourishment, population and wealth!"

original patron deity which again is supposed to have been Siva

3 This political centre of culture and commerce having been in close touch with such centres in South India and elsewhere, every important movement in the one would have been received, recorded and acted upon in the other and *vice versa*. The irresistible Buddhist wave then spreading from country to country must have passed over the Malabar Coast also, at its zenith and in its full force, pushing aside everything else that stood in its way, and this great religion must have then been accepted as the recognised religion of the land and its ruler, and continued to be so till the close of the eighth century of the Christian Era, when a strong reaction set in and the religion was completely swept away, not altogether without violence and bloodshed; and the Brahmanical religion restored. Thus the Perumals' rule came to a pathetic end and native kingdoms and dynasties sprang up here and there, and one of them, the Perumpadappu Dynasty or Svarupam inherited or

rather seized or assumed possession of the crown and throne of the Perumals with the capital, titles, temples and forms attached thereto and continued to reign as their successor: and this is said to be the origin of the surname, *Gangadhara*, an appellation of Siva, the Perumals' original patron deity, prefixed even to this day to the personal name\* of the ruler of Cochin, and of his official Sign Manual which again is explained as a rough delineation of Siva's axe and trident. This is

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\* Mr. C. Achyuta Menon says that '*Vira Kerala*' is the standing appellation or official name of the ruler of Cochin (C. S. M. P. 39). This statement, before it is accepted as correct, has to be carefully verified, as it can very easily be, by a reference to the old *Kanam deeds* of various reigns, collected and compared; and such verification will prove that the personal names of the ruler—Rama-varmah, Keralavarmah, Ravivarmah etc., as the case may be, is also his official name used in documents. Of these the name Keralavarmah may be found modified into '*Vira Kerala*' in the documents.

our argument which is further amplified and elaborated, and explained and supported by the details and circumstances noted below.

4. The Malabar Era seems to mark this epoch making revolution. It exactly coincides with the accepted age of Sri Sankaracharya the great Reformer, who again was a contemporary of the then only king of Kerala mentioned in Madhwa's account of Sankara's conquest (*Sankaravijayam*) as the author of some Sanskrit dramas that were placed before the great Acharya for his favourable opinion, and traditionally identified with the last of the Perumal rulers of Kerala which is also Mr. Logan's conclusion from *Keralolpatti* (page 238 *Malabar Manual*). Again, this Era is called *Kollam-Andu* or Kollam Era where the word *Kollam* is derived from a root meaning "murder" "slaughter" or "massacre" and may refer either to the violent persecution of the Buddhists or to the slaughter of animals at sacrifices revived under the Reform Movement with Sri Sankara as its leader, or to both, which were anti-Buddhist. It is also met

with in local names which seem to indicate either the chief centres of this slaughter, or the land-marks of the area within which it was authorised and perpetrated—Quilon (=Kollam) Quilandy (= Kollam-Andu), Cranganore or Kodungallur (=Kodum-koll-ur) a place or town or city of great or cruel slaughter or massacre (as Mr. T. Ponnambalam Pillai derives the name in his article on "*The Origin of the Cranganore Temple*" published in "*the Malabar Quarterly Review*," September 1903 though we are not prepared to endorse his subsequent explanation) and Kollengode (=Kollam-Kode—junction of Kollams). It is from this last place or from the local chieftain that the Malabar Brahmans are to get the supply of the *Soma* creeper or plant for their sacrificial rites. Thirdly, in countries situated south of the Ponnani river, the year of the Malabar Era begins on the first day of the month in which the Onam festival falls, namely, Chingom; and in countries situated north of the same river, it begins on the first day of the month that follows the festival, namely,

Kanni. The Onam festival which, at any rate, celebrates a great historical event or an event traditionally great — visit of the great Asura King Mahabali symbolizing the return of good old days, and national liberation or emancipation—was therefore the landmark of the New Era and the New year. It begins on Attam-Star Day which must have been the day of the great *coup d'etat* and *coup de main* as it is celebrated to this day by armed Royal Processions both in Cochin and at Calicut, that is both by the Raja of Cochin and by the Zamorin of Calicut.\* It lasts for 12 days, the central or most important day being Tiruvono-n-Star-Day on which the national rejoicing reaches its zenith and domestic thanksgiving services are held to the mud-made or wooden images of the deity of Tirukkakara temple, once very great and famous and now in complete ruins, the site of which is four miles to the north-east of Ernakulam, where, it is said, all the chiefs of Malabar in royal pomp and with their vassals

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\* Reference to the Attachamayam ceremony  
p. 5 ante

and retinue formerly used to attend once a year during this Onam Period to conduct the grand festivities in person, and where all other classes of people used to assemble to celebrate, to take part in, and to enjoy these festivities and to discuss their national affairs. Military tournaments and out-door exercises also characterise this Onam festival. Fourthly, the Brahmin warrior Parasurama being regarded as the founder of the Brahmin Colony of Malabar countenanced its militarism which is further borne out by its division into several military bodies called '*Sangham's*' under whose auspices its members were subjected to military training and exercises. These organisations serving no such purpose now are regarded as the meaningless survivals of the past (page 197 C. S. M). And lastly, although most of the old foreign colonies and settlements on the Malabar Coast are still represented by their surviving descendants--the Jews, the Syrians, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Moors etc, — no trace even remains today of the old Chinese colonies or settlements at Quilon

or elsewhere. Similarly the once great and famous religious centre—the temple of Tirukkakara—is in utter ruins now; and no record is left behind, at its original seat, of the once flourishing civilization or culture of the Perumals' days. This seems to be strange. Nothing short of a revolution could have effected such a clean sweep of the old state of things and judging from the contemporary events elsewhere in India we are declined to attribute this revolutionary change or clean sweep to the same wide spread cause—the struggle between Hinduism and Buddhism. The result also was the same throughout India: the former survived and the latter succumbed.

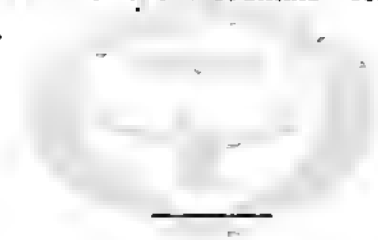
5. The foregoing circumstantial evidences—the coincidence of Malabar Era with the age of the Hinduistic revival, its name signifying slaughter, its relation to the Onam festival—a festival characterised by national rejoicing, cheering and military tournaments—, efficient Military organisation of the Malabar Brabmins and complete disappearance of all traces of the Chinese Colonies or Settlements

and records of the oldest civilization on the Malabar Coast; and above all, the contemporary events elsewhere in India, all these evidences lead to the conjecture that Perumals' Era and Dynasty were brought to an abrupt end by the wholesale massacre and persecution of the Buddhists and clean sweep of the religion; and the Malabar or the Kollam Era marks this epochmaking revolution synchronous with the rise of the several native dynasties all deriving their respective titles from the Perumals' sovereign authority. This hypothesis receives further corroborating support from the local tradition that the last of the Perumals, having become a Buddhistic convert, abdicated his throne dividing his empire among his feudatory vassals. It also has handed down a very hazy account of controversy and conflict between the adherents of the rival religions—Buddhism and Hinduism—and practical refutation of the former by the Brahmins.

6. In the resulting division of the Cheraman Empire, the Perumpadappu dynasty

of the higher military order (Kshatriya caste) headed the list of kings of the South Kollam countries and the Zamorin of a lower social status (Samanta caste) that of the North Kollam countries. The one having come into the lawful possession of the capital with the temple of the Perumals' patron deity at Tiruvanchikkulam, assumed the surname or title of *Ganghadara* and reigned as their direct heir under the Marumakkathayam law of succession, and the other, on the authority or strength of a sword which he is said to have obtained from the last of the Perumals with a *carte-blanche* for conquest and which will be referred to in Part III dealing with the dual character of the early kings, ruled as his son. Thus the history of Malabar is divisible into three periods: The early Chermanan Empire (I) divided into several native kingdoms of middle or the intermediate period (II) which again was absorbed one after another into the three modern political divisions or territories of Travancore, Cochin, and the British District of Malabar (III). Hence, unbroken continuity, from

the days of the Perumals to the present day may rightly, and legitimately, be claimed for the glorious and honourable reign of the illustrious Royal house or dynasty of Cochin which, for its high social status or noble rank, and long pedigree and rule, stands foremost among the native Royal Dynasties of Malabar, and which, we pray and hope, may and will be spared to rule the land of the Perumals' for all times to come.



### III

## The Priest King

OR

### The Divine origin of Kingship.

The Priest King of Arician Grove—"the sacred grove and sanctuary of Diana"—situated on the northern shore of the woodland lake of Nemi—"Diana's Mirror" as it was aptly called by the ancients—moving stealthily round a sacred tree that had grown there and keeping a lonely and vigilant watch with drawn sword in his hand lest he might, in turn, be taken by surprise and slain by his watchful enemy, was the central theme of Dr. Frazer's "*Golden Bough*"; and this eminent and up-to-date authority cites several instances to show that the union of royal title with priestly duties is the rule rather than the exception in the early history of Kingship.' (Ch. I Sec. 2 pp. 7 & 8)

Second Edition) and by subsequent studies, researches and expositions, traces the development of both the above offices from the magician's role. Speaking of the Sumerian kings of Babylonia during the archaic period, Dr. Pinches (in his paper read at the meeting of the Ethnological Society in London on 28th January 1914) says that "These early rulers were, to all appearances, of priestly rank—a peculiarly appropriate dispensation of things"—and dwells on their double character. (Dr. Hommel's, *Civilization of the East* page 35) Mr. Craigie in his *Religion of Ancient Scandinavia* also concludes that in virtue of their two fold offices the priestly chiefs were regarded (in ancient Norseland) as divine, and called so whence presumably "The theory of divine right of Kings" so deeply ingrained in the Teutonic temperament. The Popes of the middle ages exercised also temporal power in addition to their spiritual authority. In Lieut Col: Waddell's *Buddhism of Tibet* will be found clearly explained how the first and greatest of the Grand Lamas of Lhasa became a priest-king god

as late, as the middle of the seventeenth century. Now on the authority of Mr White-away (*"Rise of the Portuguese Power in India,"* pp.107—8) our divine rulers of Cochin may be added to the above category of priest-kings.

2. The Arician Grove which excited Dr. Frazer's insatiable scientific curiosity and engaged his attention for a long while, is not without its parallels elsewhere. Here, in the Malabar country for example, may be found, in every village as it were, such shady sacred groves '*Kavus*' as they are called in the vernacular, where are propitiated and worshipped such deities as Goddess, Ayyappan, (Iyanar), Serpents, Spirits etc., in various nomenclature and forms, of which either the first or the second class of deities, mostly the first, is the patron or guardian deity of the ancient native royal houses of Malabar. To mention some the most important sacred *groves* and sanctuaries of Goddess and Ayyappan in illustration of the above generalisation, we propose to begin with the patron deity of the royal house of Cochin which is at Pazhayannur

and called so after the same village: the goddess in Tiruvelangat-kavu temple is similarly regarded in the Zamorin's house. The goddesses worshipped in shrines, Sri-Porkali, Madai, Lokamalayarkavu, Tirumanankunnn, and Kallai-Kulangara, hold the same relation respectively to the following ancient royal houses.—Kottayam (of Cotiote-rebellion-fame) Chirakkal, Colastri, Velluanad, or Vellattu-kara and Palghat. The Iyyanar of Palisserikotta is the guardian deity of the Rajah of Kurumpranad. The above list cannot be concluded without the special mention of the most celebrated shrine — the sacred Sri-Kurumba-grove at Cranganore, famous for the annual cock-festival or sacrifice, to which the local Chief and his family are devoutly attached, as the sanctuary of their guardian goddess, and which the writer, being one of the same family, proposes to take as a typical grove sanctuary for illustration of the following observations.

3. Of late, circumstances have considerably altered: the shades of ancient dark ages are one by one vanishing fast in the

light of advancing civilization; yet, the chief and constant figure of these shady sacred groves, the inspired prophet in ecstasy, clad in red raiment with uncut hair flowing from his head, carrying a curved (?sickle-shaped) sword \* and an anklet in his hands, addressing the assembly of his parishioners (*Kuttam* p. 50, C. S. M.) and the temple authorities as the chosen representative or mouthpiece of the deity, inflicting wounds on the crown of his own head in expression of the deity's wrath and displeasure at their sins of omission and commission; and finally, falling down exhausted and unconscious for a while, to rise and to come to himself again. This figure has not altogether disappeared. His authority has been on the decline in proportion to the progress of scientific research and modern thought. Yet he is regarded still, by the superstitious

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\* The Zamorin still worships his sword as the symbolic representation both of his tutelary goddess and of his temporal power. Compare *Ayudha puja*, worship of arms or weapons offered to goddess (Vide also Logan's *Malabar Manual* pp. 226 & 241) The Zamorin also wears a golden anklet always.

folk, as the chosen favourite of the deity, and as such, is credited with occult powers (magic), and is appealed to, for help, in times of wide spread distress, such as severe epidemics of cholera, smallpox, fever, etc., which again are supposed to be the various forms of punishment inflicted by the angry deity on disobedient and sinful subjects. Under inspiration he speaks out the will of the deity, and his word is law which every one must respectfully obey as he loyally submits to the will of the king. The self-infliction of wounds may be a survival of the custom of killing the old divine king. The prophet displeased with the insubordinate or insurgent attitude of his flock is perhaps trying to kill himself, which seems to be analogous to martyrdom and self sacrifice. Here we may look for the germ of the divine right of kings, which might have developed into a separate institution in this way. The divine will was the law of the realm and of the tribe. The inspired prophet, as the accredited agent of the deity, was the original medium of its

expression, emanation and exercise. On the gradual subsidence of his ecstasy and inspiration, the prophet is supposed to remember no longer what he had uttered under supernatural influences. Hence a permanent authority called *Koima* or *Koyima* came into existence to record and execute the divine commands, and this, gradually and in course of time, grew, developed and expanded into sovereign power in general. Permanent priesthood too might have been a similar offshoot, the growth of which might have been further accelerated by the Brahmanical aryanisation of the old native cults.

4. Here we may bring in and adduce further evidence, if any, in support of the above conjecture; and we have already noted in our monograph on the Kshatriyas of Cochin originally written for the Ethnographic survey of the State, the curious coincidences of the same Dravidian and Sanskrit words *Koyil* (*Koil* or *Kovil*) and *Prasada* respectively denoting both a temple and a royal residence or palace. The first is the vernacular name of

the Malayali Kshatriya caste and a derivative of it, *Koyima*\* or *Koima* above referred to, denotes sovereign power, with special reference to the temples. Again, the word *Karu* meaning a sacred grove is also met with as the pet name of the Dravidian women in Malabar. Further, both the palaces and temples are guarded by outer walls and towers; and what are generally regarded as the royal paraphernalia, such as silken umbrellas, chowries, flag staff, conches, drums, long handled oil-stand-lamps, etc., are used in temples also, as a matter of right, and without any special royal sanction which is required for their general use outside the royal or select aristocratic

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\* The word *Koyima* and its variants are formed of *Koyil* (or its variants) and *Ma*; and mean temple authority, royal prerogative or sovereign power. The termination *Ma* is found in other words *Adima* and *Kaimal* derived from roots *Adi* (foot) and *Kai* (arm). *Tiru-Kovil-Adhi-karikal* is a standing appellation or title of the Rajahs of Cochin (C S. M. P. 39 foot note). It may mean a Kshatriya ruler or a temple authority.

circles. The following passage from Dr. Oldham's "*The Sun and the Serpent*" Ch. III. pp. 93—94 may, in this connection, be quoted *verbatim* for the reader's ready reference :—

"The priests of these temples, whether of the Nagas or of the Devas, are Kshatriyas or Khattris as they are called in the vernacular. \* \* \* \* \*

At some temples however, the priests are so called "*desi*" or local Brahmans. These belong to none of the known Brahmanical clans, and are not recognised by them. They probably are members of families who, from long connection with temples, have acquired priestly dignity. In many places they intermarry with the Khattris. \* \* \* \* \*

Orthodox Brahmans may sometimes be found as priests, but the inspired prophet (sometimes known as *Ra*.) is generally a Kshatriya, but sometimes, though rarely, he is a "*desi*" Brahman. An orthodox Brahman is never known to act in this capacity".

5. What we, with Dr. Frazer and other eminent authorities as our guides, have

observed in the shady grove sanctuaries of Malabar also lead to the same conclusion, viz., that the magicians and prophets of old, developed into priest-kings or kings and priests — a proposition from which we further deduce or generalise that religion, ancient and modern, is built upon something superhuman— *miracle* — which, being beyond the comprehension of the primitive and general mind, generates therein such emotions as express themselves outwardly in prayers, worship and offerings; namely, awe, fear, wonder, admiration, veneration, thankfulness and so forth. These miraculous, incomprehensible or inexplicable phenomena seem to have been regarded as the expression of a supernatural Will-power; and here is the idea of God.

6. To apply the above thesis to all departments of religion:— the medicine-men of old, propounding the inherent virtues or powers of common objects on earth (both animate and inanimate) and using them to effect cures of maladies, were the wonder-working prophets of primitive animism (includ-

ing fetishism) and the objects that were used in their preparations were regarded as the abodes of the various spirits. The phenomena of heaven or sky, such as light, darkness, rain, thunder, eclipse, etc., were equally wonderful to the primitive mind, and the man who could explain them—the astronomer and astrologer—was the prophet of the heavenly or sky Gods that cause such phenomena. The Babylonian myth of creation in which the Sun God, after vanquishing in battle, the several-headed Monster that had arisen from the sea, cuts him asunder, and of the two halves makes heaven and earth, seems to be a vivid description of the eruption of a sea-girt volcano resulting in upheaval and appearance of land all round. The columns of fire, smoke, ashes, stones, mud and other matters shot up far high into the air causing complete darkness were the several heads of this formidable sea-monster (the volcano); a stormy sea, thunder lightning and explosion, the activities of the rival forces engaged in the hot contest; the awful scene of resulting devastation, not

unlike a great battle field; and the new plot or area of land thus brought up and made visible was a real creation, and so also the few surviving plants and animals appeared to be. The third department or branch of religion is ancestor-worship including funeral ceremonies. Birth and death, and life and death are the inexplicable phenomena involved herein. The nearest relative witness of the death scene, i. e., the nearest relation of the dead, being in a high state of excitement and grief would be beside himself as the inspired prophet. The dying relation or friend in agony was an intolerable sight to him and the shock of death and tragedy would be overmastering. And in this state of mind he would not be able to realise and believe that his dead relation left him for ever. He would be disposed to interpret the phenomenon as a temporary exit of the soul through the final out-going breath and would expect its return through the same channel; and in dreams he would meet the dead relative or his ghost in various moods, sometimes angry, sometimes agreeable, and

sometimes dissatisfied, sometimes plaintive and so forth. Hence he offers his dues in corresponding moods — fear, love, pity and so on. He is the prophet of the Dead. And lastly, these prophets and magicians as well as the great heroes (kings) and the priests deriving their status and authority directly or indirectly from a divine source, also, commanded respect and exacted obedience, as Gods, while they were alive, and were, in their turn, deified on their death. Their burial grounds might grow into centres of general worship; and temples, shrines and other sacred enclosures might have come into existence there in course of time, and this seems to have given rise to idolatry.

7. Thus we have derived from the same source the religious observances in all the primitive forms-- animism (including fetishism) nature worship, ancestor worship (including funeral ceremonies) and idolatry (worship of images) — and conclude that in all ages and in all climes the ultimate sure test or proof of divine origin relied on and employed

has been *miracle*. But we decline to discuss and say which of the above forms was the earliest or which more primitive, all of them, in our humble opinion, having simultaneously or *pari passu* developed in different lines from the same fundamental principle or idea.



